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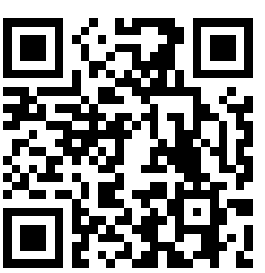

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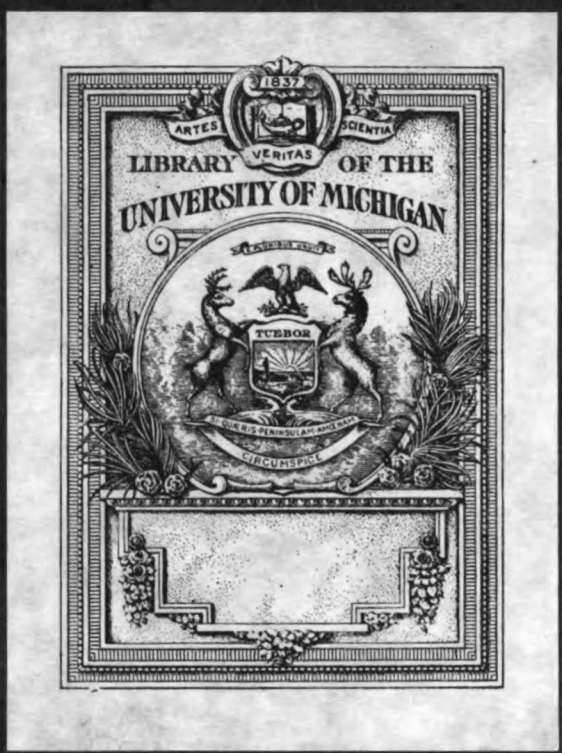

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MISCELLANEOUS. No. 17 (1916.)

St. Brit. Foreign Office

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH

THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR

RESPECTING

THE TRANSFER TO SWITZERLAND OF BRITISH AND GERMAN WOUNDED AND SICK COMBATANT PRISONERS OF WAR.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.
May 1916.

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Correspondence with the United States Ambassador respecting the Transfer to Switzerland of British and German Wounded and Sick Combatant Prisoners of War.

No. 1.

Sir E. Grey to Mr. Page, United States Ambassador at London.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and has the honour to state that His Majesty's Government are anxious to come to an agreement with the German Government for the transfer of British and German wounded or invalid prisoners of war to Switzerland on the lines of the agreement in force between the French and German Government.

His Majesty's Government would suggest that the agreement should be based on the following general principles :—

(*a.*) All prisoners of war held by either Government whose maladies are included in the schedule, of which a copy is annexed,* but who are not sufficiently incapacitated to justify repatriation, are to be transferred to Switzerland.

(*b.*) This schedule may be revised from time to time by mutual agreement.

(*c.*) In order to ensure a loyal execution of these conditions, Swiss medical men may inspect all places of internment and hospitals in which prisoners of war are under treatment, both in the United Kingdom and in Germany.

The agreement which, it is understood, has been reached between France and Germany, whereby this Medical Commission shall consist of three doctors, the president belonging to the country visited and the other two Swiss, appears to be suitable.

(*d.*) Any prisoner of war may claim the right to be examined by this Commission.

(*e.*) Those selected by the Commission as suitable for internment in Switzerland will be assembled at some convenient spot in the two countries for final judgment by a supreme Commisssion of which two-thirds of the numbers shall be Swiss.

(*f.*) Each Government undertakes to defray the costs of the internment of its nationals in Switzerland.

(*g.*) Each Government undertakes to hand back to the Swiss authorities any prisoner of war who escapes.

Sir E. Grey would be much obliged if Mr. Page would kindly communicate the substance of the above by telegraph to the United States Ambassador at Berlin, with the request that his Excellency may be good enough to ascertain whether the German Government will agree to an arrangement on the lines suggested,

In that event, the German Government may be willing, in order to inaugurate the arrangement, to take advantage of the presence in Germany of the Swiss doctors who, it is understood, are at present engaged in examining the French prisoners of war in Germany in connection with the similar arrangement in force between France and Germany.

Foreign Office, March 25, 1916.

No. 2.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Page.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and, with reference to his note of the 25th ultimo, has the honour to enquire whether any reply has yet been received from the United States Ambassador at Berlin to the enquiry which his Excellency was requested kindly to make of the German Government respecting the proposed arrangement for the transfer of British and German wounded or invalid prisoners of war to Switzerland.

Foreign Office, April 12, 1916.

* Schedule not printed, as it was superseded by schedule in No. 4.

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No. 3.

Mr. Page to Sir Edward Grey.—(*Received April* 20.)

THE American Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and, in reply to Sir E. Grey's communication of the 12th April respecting the proposed arrangement for the transfer of British and German wounded or invalid prisoners of war to Switzerland, has the honour to state that, up to the present, no reply has been received from the Imperial Foreign Office with reference to Sir E. Grey's note of the 25th March.

American Embassy, London,
April 19, 1916.

No. 4.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Page.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and has the honour to refer to his notes of the 25th ultimo and the 12th instant relative to the proposed transfer of invalid prisoners of war to Switzerland.

From information subsequently received, it appears that the schedule of disabilities rendering prisoners eligible for this transfer, of which a copy was enclosed in Sir E. Grey's former note, has since been materially extended, and Sir E. Grey will therefore be greatly obliged if the United States Ambassador at Berlin can be requested to be good enough to ascertain whether the German Government will agree to the conclusion of an agreement on the basis of the revised schedule, of which a copy is enclosed herewith for his Excellency's information and guidance.

Foreign Office, April 21, 1916.

Enclosure in No. 4.

List of Diseases, Infirmities, and Results of Wounds considered as rendering Prisoners of War Eligible for Internment in Switzerland.

1. TUBERCULOSIS of the respiratory organs, even in incipient stages.
2. Tuberculosis of other organs (skin, glands, bones, joints, digestive organs, urinary system, sexual organs, &c.).
3. Chronic constitutional diseases, chronic affections of the blood, and chronic intoxications (malaria, diabetes, leucocythemia, pernicious anæmia; poisoning by chlorine, carbonic oxide, lead, mercury, &c.).
4. Chronic affections of the respiratory system (stenoses, marked emphysema, chronic bronchitis, asthma, chronic pleurisy, &c.).
5. Chronic affections of the circulatory system (heart disease, disease of the heart muscle, aneurism, severe varix, arterio-sclerosis, &c.).
6. Chronic affections of the digestive organs necessitating special diet of long duration.
7. Chronic affections of the urinary and sexual organs (chronic nephritis, stone, hypertrophy of the prostate, &c.)
8. Chronic affections of the central and peripheral nervous systems (hysteria, epilepsy, Basedow's disease, chronic sciatica, paralysis, cramps, and other grave nervous conditions).
9. Chronic diseases of the organs of the senses (glaucoma, inflammation of the cornea, iris, choroid, &c.; chronic middle ear disease, &c.).
10. Blindness, or the loss of one eye if the remaining eye does not possess normal vision.
11. Deafness of both ears.

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12. Chronic diseases of the skin of wide extent, cutaneous ulcers, fistulæ.
13. Chronic articular rheumatism and gout with visible deformity.
14. Malignant or non-malignant tumours, but with marked functional troubles.
15. Severe general debility due to age or disease.
16. Serious forms of syphilis causing functional troubles.
17. Loss of a limb, in an officer or non-commissioned officer.
18. Stiffness of important joints, false joints, shortening of limb, atrophy of muscles, paralysis due to gunshot wounds and likely to be of long duration.
19. All conditions resulting from disease or wounds not included in the above-mentioned categories, but causing unfitness for full military service for at least a year (mutilation of the face or jaw, results of trephining, indolent wounds, &c.).
20. Isolated cases not included in any of the above categories whose wounds or disease are of equal severity to those in the above-mentioned classes, and which, in the opinion of the Commission, require internment in Switzerland.

* * * * *

The following cases should be excluded :—

1. All serious nervous or mental affections requiring treatment in a special establishment.
2. Chronic alcoholism.
3. All communicable diseases within the period of their infectivity (infectious diseases, gonorrhœa, syphilis, venereal sores, trachoma, &c.).

No. 5.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Page.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and has the honour to refer to his note of the 21st instant, enclosing a revised schedule of the disabilities which His Majesty's Government would propose, should entitle British and German prisoners of war to be transferred to Switzerland from Germany and the United Kingdom respectively.

Sir E. Grey would be much obliged if the United States Ambassador at Berlin could be informed by telegraph that this revised schedule is being forwarded to Berlin, and if his Excellency could be requested to telegraph whether the German Government agree in principle to the transfer of British and German wounded to Switzerland.

Foreign Office, April 22, 1916.

No. 6.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Page.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and has the honour to refer to his note of the 22nd instant and previous notes, enquiring whether the German Government would agree to the transfer to Switzerland of British and German wounded and invalid combatant prisoners of war.

Sir E. Grey would be grateful if Mr. Page would again request the United States Ambassador at Berlin by telegraph to endeavour to obtain the formal consent of the German Government to the proposal of His Majesty's Government.

It is not possible to make an official request to the Swiss Government to inaugurate the necessary arrangements pending the receipt of the reply of the German Government, and much unnecessary hardship is being caused by the failure of the German Government to send a reply.

Foreign Office, April 29, 1916.

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No. 7.

Mr. Page to Sir Edward Grey.—(*Received May* 2.)

THE American Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to Sir E. Grey's note of the 22nd April, relative to the proposed transfer of British and German prisoners of war to Switzerland, has the honour to acquaint Sir E. Grey with the text of a telegram received from the Embassy at Berlin, dated the 27th April, as follows:—

"In note received to-day Foreign Office states German Government agrees to transfer of German and British wounded to Switzerland on same principle as between Germans and French, and suggests employment of Swiss doctors to make preliminary examination.

"Final decision to be made by respective Exchange Commissions on principles agreed to by Germany and France.

"Foreign Office proposes transfer to begin about the 17th May, if British Government declares willingness to begin on same date.

"Foreign Office presumes German prisoners will be sent through France to Lyons, and safety guaranteed by both British and French Governments.

"Written communications will be forwarded next pouch.

"Assume British Government possesses French schedule of disabilities."

American Embassy, London,
May 1, 1916.

No. 8.

Mr. Page to Sir Edward Grey.—(*Received May* 11.)

THE American Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and with further reference to the arrangements for the transfer to Switzerland of British and German wounded and invalid combatant prisoners of war and to Sir E. Grey's note dated the 29th April, 1916, has the honour to transmit herewith *note verbale* of the Imperial Foreign Office dated the 26th April, received through the Embassy at Berlin, conveying the agreement of the German Government to the proposed transfers and the terms on which the agreement is based.

Mr. Page will be happy to transmit to the Embassy at Berlin the substance of any reply that His Majesty's Government may desire to make to this communication.

American Embassy, London,
May 11, 1916.

Enclosure in No. 8.

Note verbale.

(Translation.)

WITH reference to the American Embassy's notes of the 28th ultimo and the 1st instant, relative to the internment of German and British prisoners of war in Switzerland, the Foreign Office have the honour to state as follows:—

The Imperial Government agree that the question of the removal to Switzerland of members of the German army prisoners of war in England, and members of the British army prisoners of war in Germany, should be governed by the same principles as have already been mutually agreed upon between Germany and France with respect to their prisoners of war. The list of diseases, &c., which, in accordance with this agreement, regulate the question of internment in Switzerland, is enclosed herewith.

For the sake of the greatest possible uniformity, it appears desirable to the Imperial Government that in the case of Germany and Great Britain the prisoners of war should be subjected to a preliminary examination by Swiss doctors, as was the case a short while ago with respect to the German, French, and Belgian prisoners of war. The

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final decision concerning persons provisionally passed for removal to Switzerland would have to be taken by the Exchange Commissions of both sides, the strength and constitution of which bodies would correspond with those already in existence which deal with the internment of German and French prisoners in Switzerland.

The date for the first transport for British prisoners of war in Switzerland will be about the 17th May, provided that the British Government declare themselves ready to commence the transport of German prisoners on the same day. It is presumed that the German prisoners from England will be conveyed through France to Lyons. It is essential that both the British and French Governments should guarantee their maintenance and safety throughout the journey.

The Foreign Office request the Embassy to bring this to the knowledge of the British Government, through the usual channels, and to transmit their reply as quickly as possible.

Berlin, April 26, 1916.

Enclosure 2 in No. 8.

List of Diseases, Infirmities, and Results of Wounds considered as rendering Prisoners of War Eligible for Internment in Switzerland.

1. TUBERCULOSIS of the respiratory organs, even in incipient stages.
2. Tuberculosis of other organs (skin, glands, bones, joints, digestive organs, urinary system, sexual organs, &c.).
3. Chronic constitutional diseases, chronic affections of the blood, and chronic intoxications (diabetes, leucocythemia, pernicious anæmia, poisoning by chlorine, carbonic oxide, lead, mercury, &c.).
4. Chronic affections of the respiratory system (stenoses, marked emphysema, chronic bronchitis, asthma, chronic inflammation of the chest, chronic pleurisy, &c.).
5. Chronic affections of the circulatory system (cardiac palpitation, disease of the heart muscle, aneurism, severe varix, arterio-sclerosis, &c.).
6. Chronic affections of the digestive organs necessitating special diet of long duration.
7. Chronic affections of the urinary and sexual organs (chronic nephritis, stone in the bladder, hypertrophy of the prostate, &c.).
8. Chronic affections of the central and peripheral nervous systems (hysteria, epilepsy, Basedow's disease, chronic sciatica, paralysis, cramps, and other grave nervous conditions).
9. Chronic diseases of the organs of senses (glaucoma, inflammation of the cornea, iris, choroid, &c., otitis chronica media, &c.).
10. Blindness, or the loss of one eye, if the remaining eye does not possess normal vision.
11. Deafness of both ears.
12. Chronic diseases of the skin of wide extent, cutaneous ulcers, fistulæ.
13. Chronic articular rheumatism and gout with visible deformity.
14. Malignant tumours or non-malignant tumours in conjunction with marked functional troubles.
15. Severe general debility due to age or disease.
16. Serious forms of syphilis causing functional troubles.
17. Loss of a limb, in the case of an officer or non-commissioned officer.
18. Stiffness of important joints, false joints, shortening of limb, atrophy of muscles, nerve-paralysis, due to gunshot wounds, and likely to be of long duration.
19. All conditions resulting from disease or wounds not included in the above-mentioned categories, but causing complete unfitness for military service for at least one year (mutilation of the face, shattering of the jaw, after-effects of trephining, indolent wounds, &c.).
20. Isolated cases which do not fall within any of the above categories, but where the wounds or injuries are of equal severity to those in the above-mentioned classes, and which in the opinion of the Commission urgently require internment.

* * * * *

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The following should be excluded :—

1. All serious nervous or mental affections requiring treatment in a special establishment.
2. Chronic alcoholism.
3. All communicable diseases within the period of their infectivity (infectious diseases, gonorrhœa, trachoma, &c.).

No. 9.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Page.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of his Excellency's notes of the 1st and 11th instant, conveying the acceptance by the German Government of the proposal of His Majesty's Government that British and German invalid and wounded combatant prisoners of war who are not eligible for repatriation should be interned in Switzerland.

His Majesty's Government agree with the view of the German Government that the British and German prisoners of war held in Germany and the United Kingdom respectively should undergo a preliminary examination by Swiss doctors, and the Swiss Government have been requested to send doctors to this country for the purpose as soon as possible. The Swiss Government, after due consideration of the circumstances, are of opinion that it will not be possible for the transfer of German prisoners of war held in this country to begin before the 25th instant. The German prisoners of war will be handed over to the Swiss authorities at Lyons.

Sir E. Grey has the honour to add that the French Government have no objection to raise to the transfer of the German prisoners of war through France.

It is observed that "malaria" is omitted from category 3 of disabilities enclosed in Mr. Page's note of the 11th instant, presumably by an oversight.

Sir E. Grey would be much obliged if the above could be communicated to the United States Ambassador at Berlin by telegraph.

Foreign Office, May 13, 1916.

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